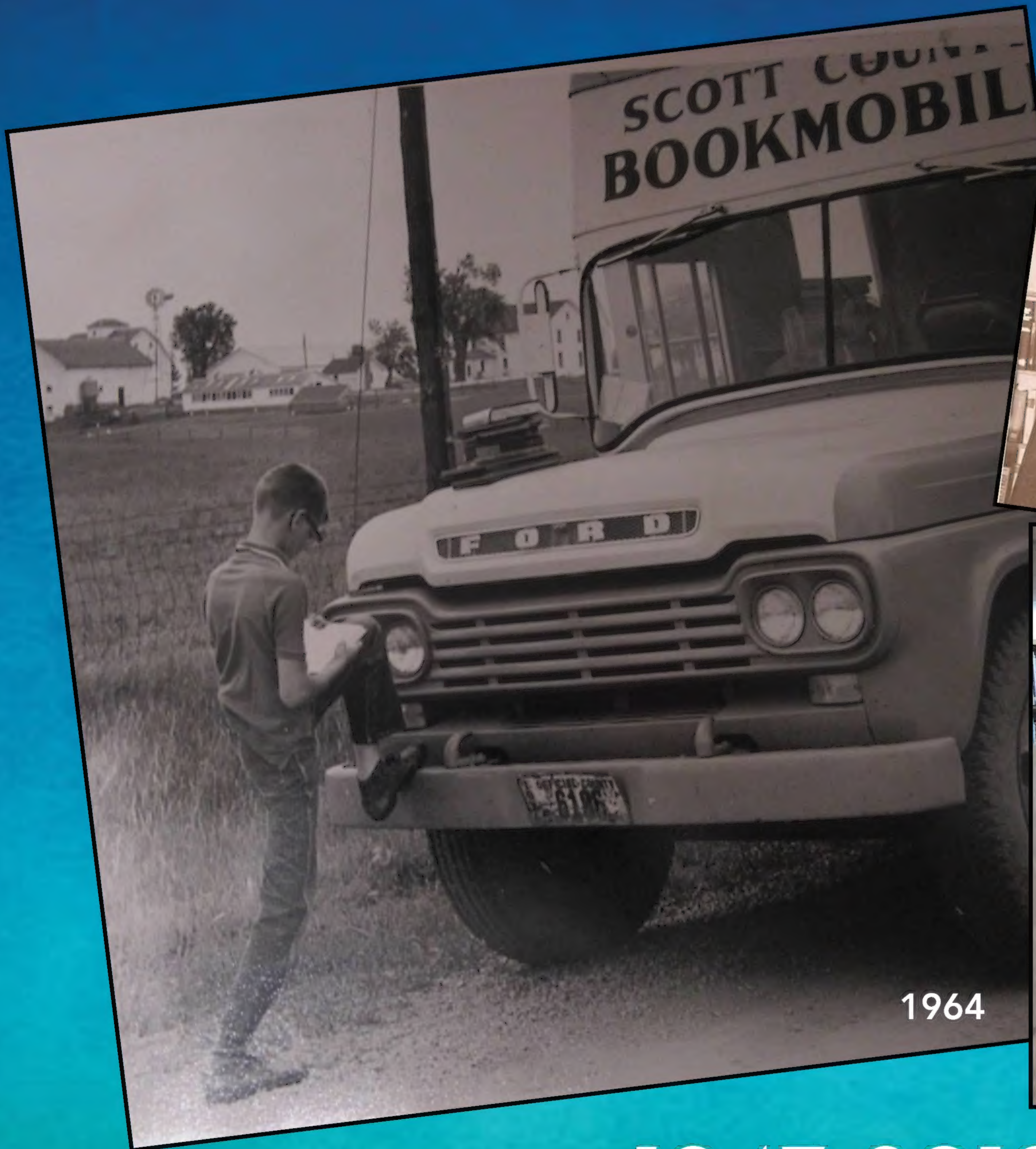


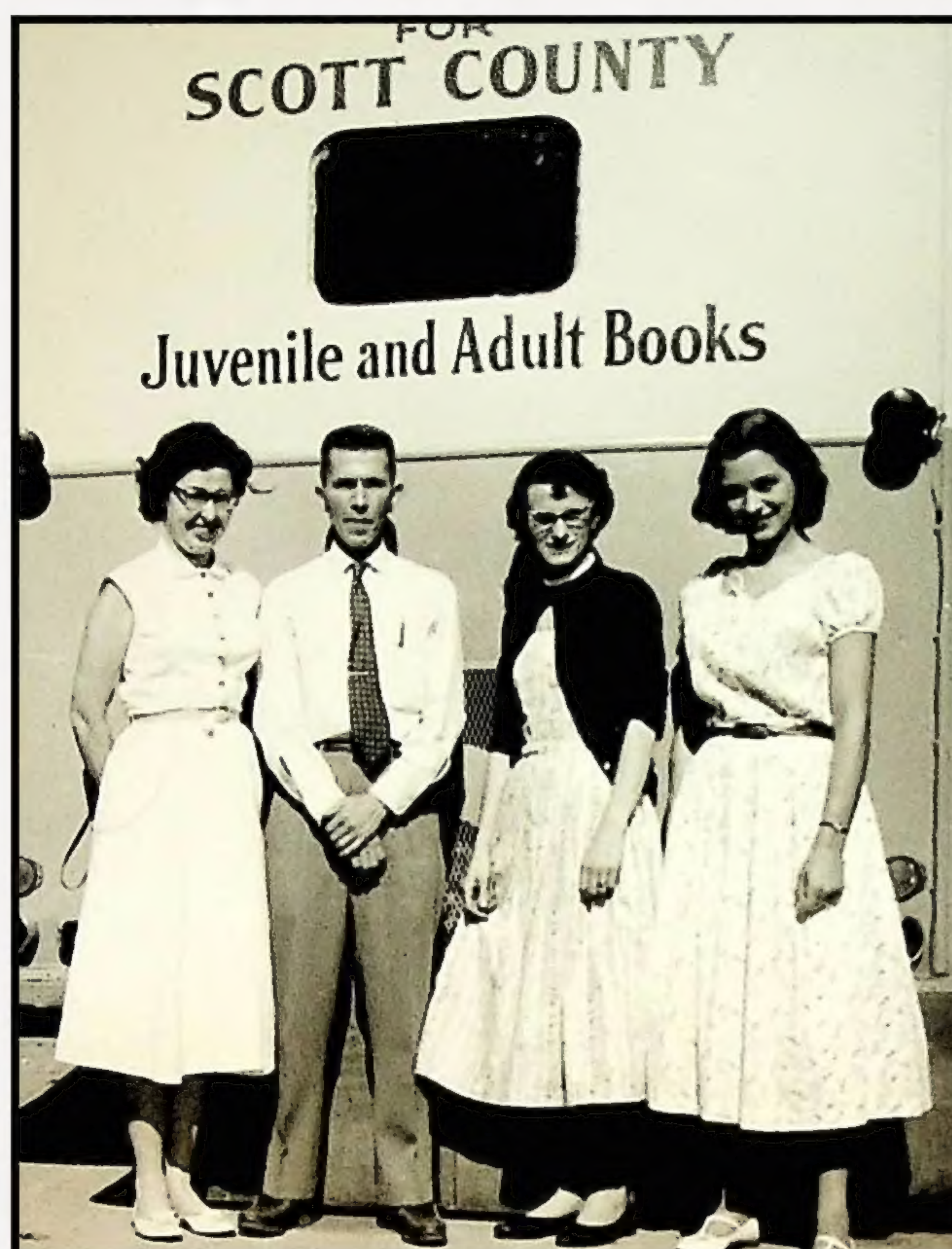
History of the Scott County Library System



1947-2019

By Christine Barth

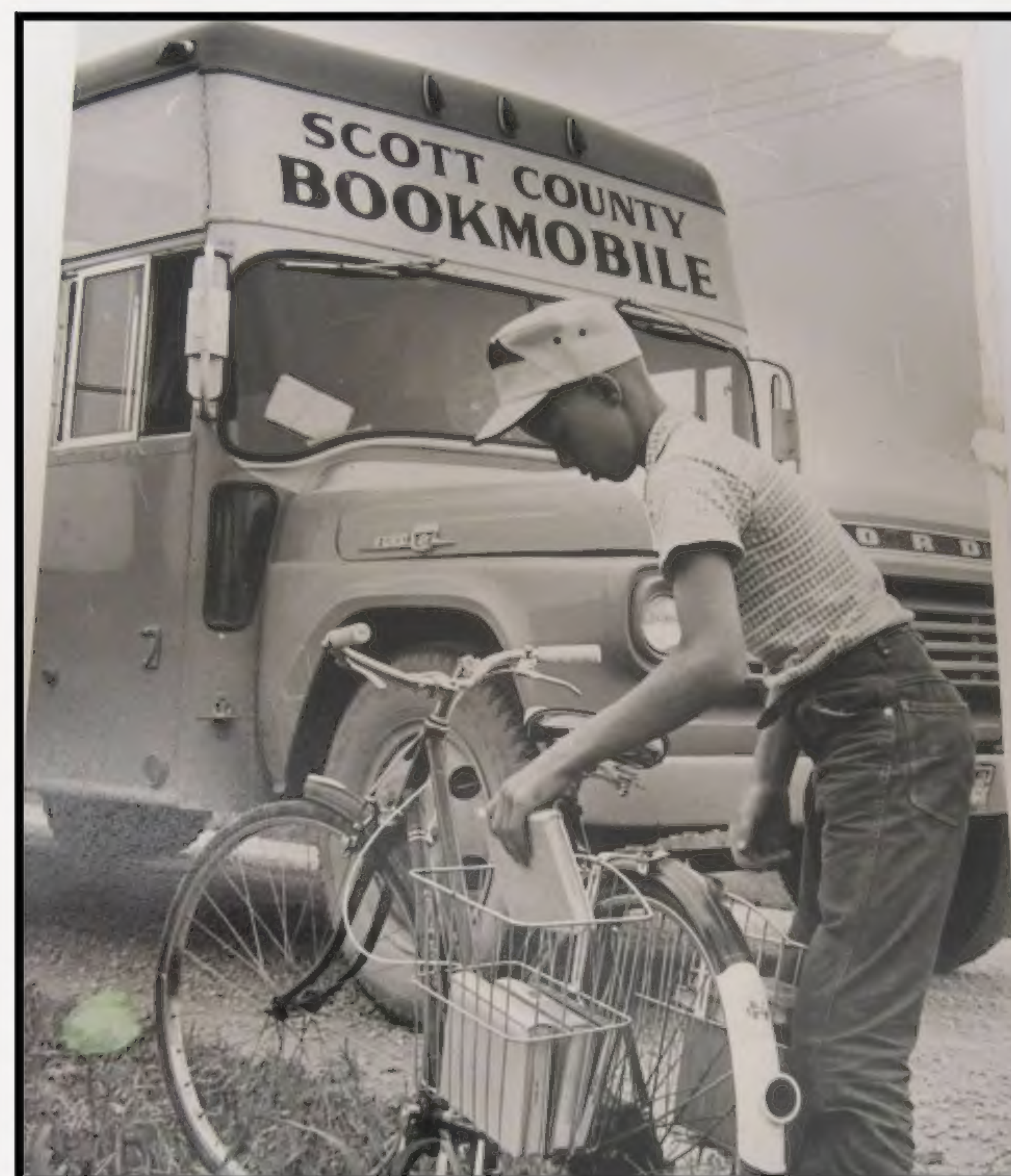
Bookmobile librarian, Peggy DuBoe, Director, George Gardner, Margaret Kramer, and Joan Madden stand in front of the Gertenslager vehicle in the 1950s.



Park View station attendant Marie Anderson with a Gaylord machine, 1969. Gaylord machines stamped book cards with the library card number and the due date, some even stamped the branch location.



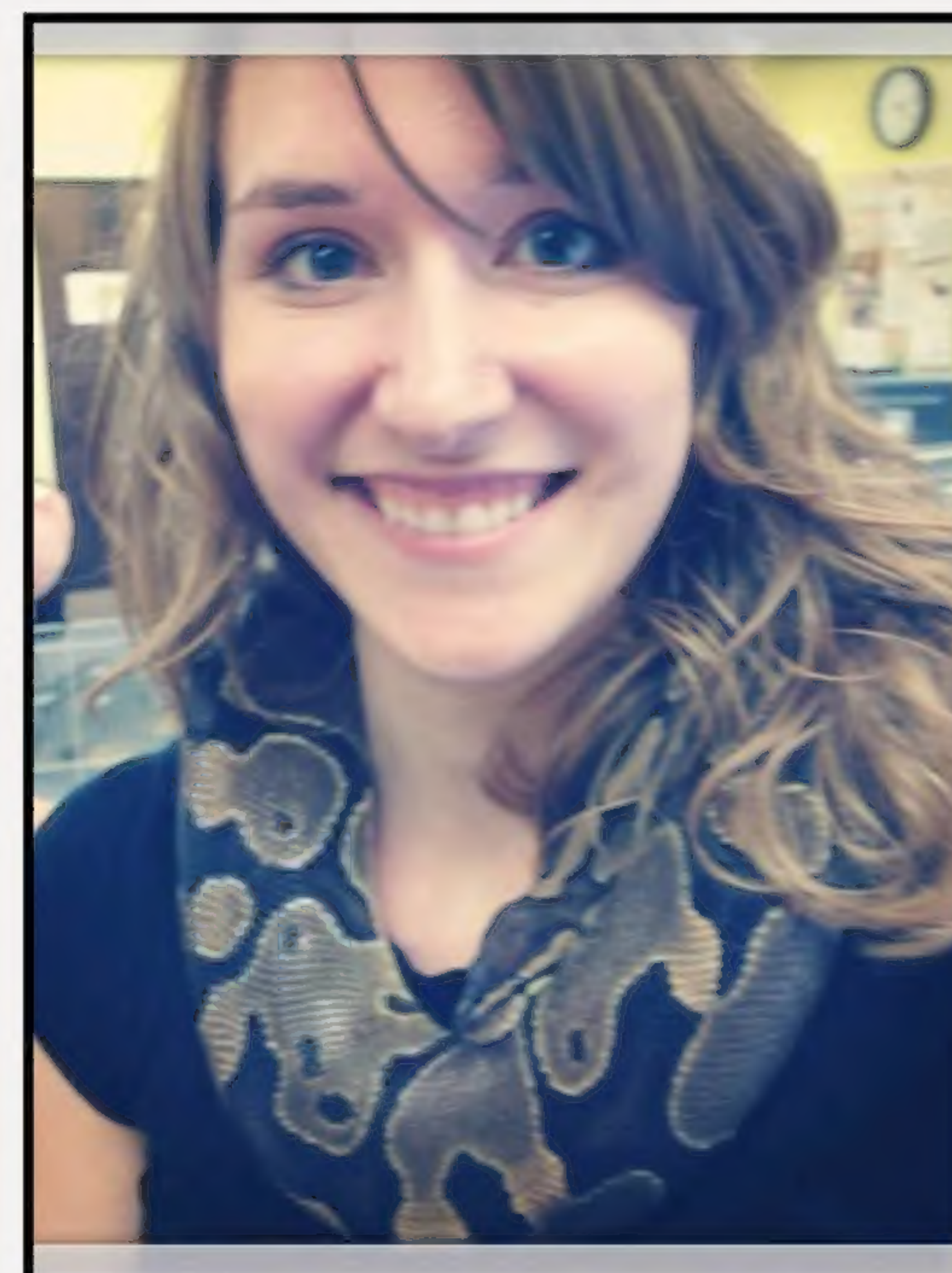
Madelyn Phares works on crafts with kids at the LeClaire branch in 1998.



A boy puts books in his bike basket after visiting the Bookmobile in June 1964.



Early literacy outreach coordinator Carol Albrecht poses with Curious George and the Man in the Yellow Hat at Eldridge in 2006.



Children's librarian Christine Garrow proudly wears a snake at a Down by the Creek animal sanctuary event at the Durant branch in 2013.

History of the Scott County Library System, 1947 - 2019 by Christine Barth

Published by the Scott County Library System in 2020 in honor of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the Scott County Library System.



Scott County map with red dots marking Bookmobile stops, circa 1947.



Director Elizabeth Hage with Bookmobile driver James Bird outside the 1950 converted school bus.

In the first half of the 20th century, rural residents of Scott County had no access to library services. Public school teacher Edna Spies noticed many of her students could not get books they needed and wanted, so she began taking donated books to schools. Legend has it that she used a WWII-era Willys army jeep. She could not keep up with demand and continued to solicit donations for delivery to the 110 one-room schoolhouses throughout Scott County.

On June 16, 1947 the Scott County Bookmobile Corporation was formally organized. It was dedicated on October 3, 1947 as a memorial to students, educators, and the servicemen of Scott County. Spies served as the driver and first president of the Bookmobile association.

In 1948, the people of rural Scott County voted to establish the Scott County Library System, which would be supported by taxes allocated by the county board of supervisors. A nine-member board was appointed in 1949.

The demand for library services soon outpaced the jeep, and Spies began using an old school bus, which was paid for entirely by donations. When Spies went to make the final payment for the old bus, she brought in thousands of pennies given by rural children. She said it took a long time for the auto dealer to count them all. The Bookmobile bus held 1,500 books and a movie projector and screen. Regular rounds began to small towns in the county.



The "Station bus", a 1950 Chevy Carryall, was used to exchange books between station buildings. Pictured here are Anna Wilford, Lorna Tank and Denny Koch in June 1961.

Officers of the Scott County Bookmobile Corporation, 1947

President: Edna Spies (Dixon), Vice-president: Wesley Schmalz (Princeton), Secretary: Fred Bolte (Blue Grass), Treasurer: Laverna Wriedt (Walcott). Directors: Roy Curtis (Princeton), Jean Carlin (Maysville), Erwin Allbee (Blue Grass).

Scott County Library System board members, 1950

President: Forrest J. Ford (Dixon), Vice-president: Elmer Hamann (Davenport), Secretary: Mrs. W.C. Vollstedt (Dixon), Mrs. Harry Kleeburg (Princeton), Roy Curtis (Princeton), Erwin Allbee (Blue Grass), Mrs. H.E. Lund (Princeton), Raymond Baetke (Long Grove), George Ranson (Long Grove). Ray Baetke served on the library board for the next 37 years!



Edna
Spies

1905

-

1988

Edna Smith was born March 5, 1905 in Davenport to John Hayes and Edith Snyder Smith, descendants of one of Scott County's early pioneer families. She married John Spies in 1928 and they raised four children.

Edna taught elementary school at numerous rural schools, teaching as many as 2,000 students over 47 years.

As a teacher, she saw first-hand the need for books in rural Scott County, which reminded her of her own childhood on a farm in Cherokee, Iowa. As a girl, Edna suffered a long illness and asked her grandfather to get books from the library to keep her mind occupied. Her grandfather was turned away from the town library because they lived in the country. Many of her students in the early 1940s had the same disappointment, so Edna began asking for donations of books. The demand soon exceeded her supply, so she began the process to formally start a library service in rural Scott County. Farm and small town families would donate books, or a nickel, a dime or a dollar bill. One family gave all their books except the family Bible.

Edna received the Good American citation from NBC for establishing the Scott County Bookmobile and was recognized by President Harry S. Truman, the governor of Iowa, and the Iowa Library Association for her library work.

In addition to being the founding mother of the Scott County Library System, Edna was one of the original press correspondents for the North Scott Press and served with many organizations including the Dixon Senior Citizens, Dixon American Legion Auxiliary, Pythian Sisters, Womens Federated Club, CASI, Great River Bend Services, Dixon Bicentennial Commission, Scott County Genealogical Society, and the Liberty Township Farm Bureau.

Edna left a legacy of civic service and passed on the love of reading to many children, including her own. Her daughter, Beverly Mangravite, said in a 2005 tribute to her mother: "When I walk into a library it is like Christmas every day; every book is a present waiting to be unwrapped..."

Soon, the Bookmobile had so many donations, that a physical building was needed to house them. In 1950, the county leased the first library building in Eldridge in the Eckermann Implement building on 2nd Street.

1950s

The 25 x 52 foot, one room library housed 6,000 books, and a garage was built for the Bookmobile. At first the building was set up just to serve the Bookmobile, but soon residents began using the facility for reading and reference work. The first board meeting in Eldridge was held using two orange crates and a tin shop bench for seating.

The board appointed Elizabeth Hage as the first librarian of the Scott County Library System, and Spies retired. Hage made plans for the acquisition of books and supplies, and for the remodel of the Eldridge facility. She hired three staff members. The Bookmobile schedule included stops in 16 communities, but the fall and winter were strictly devoted to students. By April, 4,000 books had been received and processed and by August, the system had 643 registered borrowers.

The library was so popular, more branch buildings were acquired. The first station, as branches were referred to at the time, opened in July 1950 in Princeton. The 480 square foot space was staffed with volunteer attendants until attendant Burdette Huston was hired in 1951. In September 1950, the Blue Grass station opened on the second floor of the American Legion Home. The local PTA provided volunteers to staff it.



Mrs. Eldon Claussen, James E. Bird, Marilyn Kakert, and Director Elizabeth Hage at Eldridge on April 12, 1950.

The first station building of the Scott County Library System opened in January 1950 in the Eckermann implement building in Eldridge. Eldridge was selected as headquarters because there was a building available and it was in a central location. In 1952, the board approved \$25,000 for the budget.



Lyle Mumm of Stockton and Bookmobile librarian, Peggy Ann DuBoe, pose inside the Bookmobile at the fairgrounds in August 1956. One visitor at the time said he saw people coming by foot, automobile, and horse to borrow books.



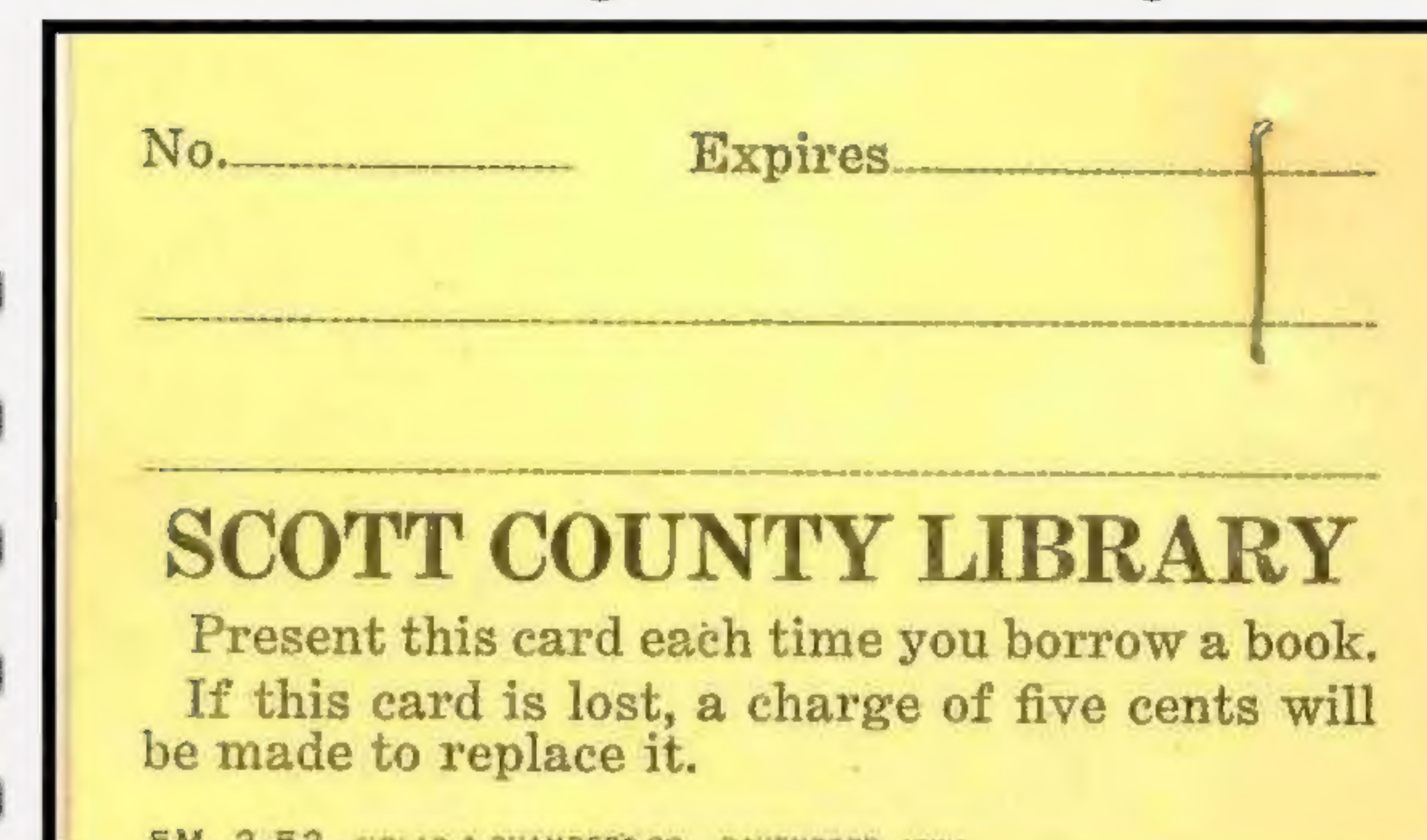
Cataloger Mary Lois Nelson and Director Elizabeth Hage stand with film projectors on April 29, 1955. In 1955, SCLS joined the Quad City film service, the first co-operative library loan service to cross state lines.

Moline Public Library stored the films and distributed them to library patrons around the Quad Cities. Film topics included: "dating for the teenager, life along the Mississippi, voting and traveling..."

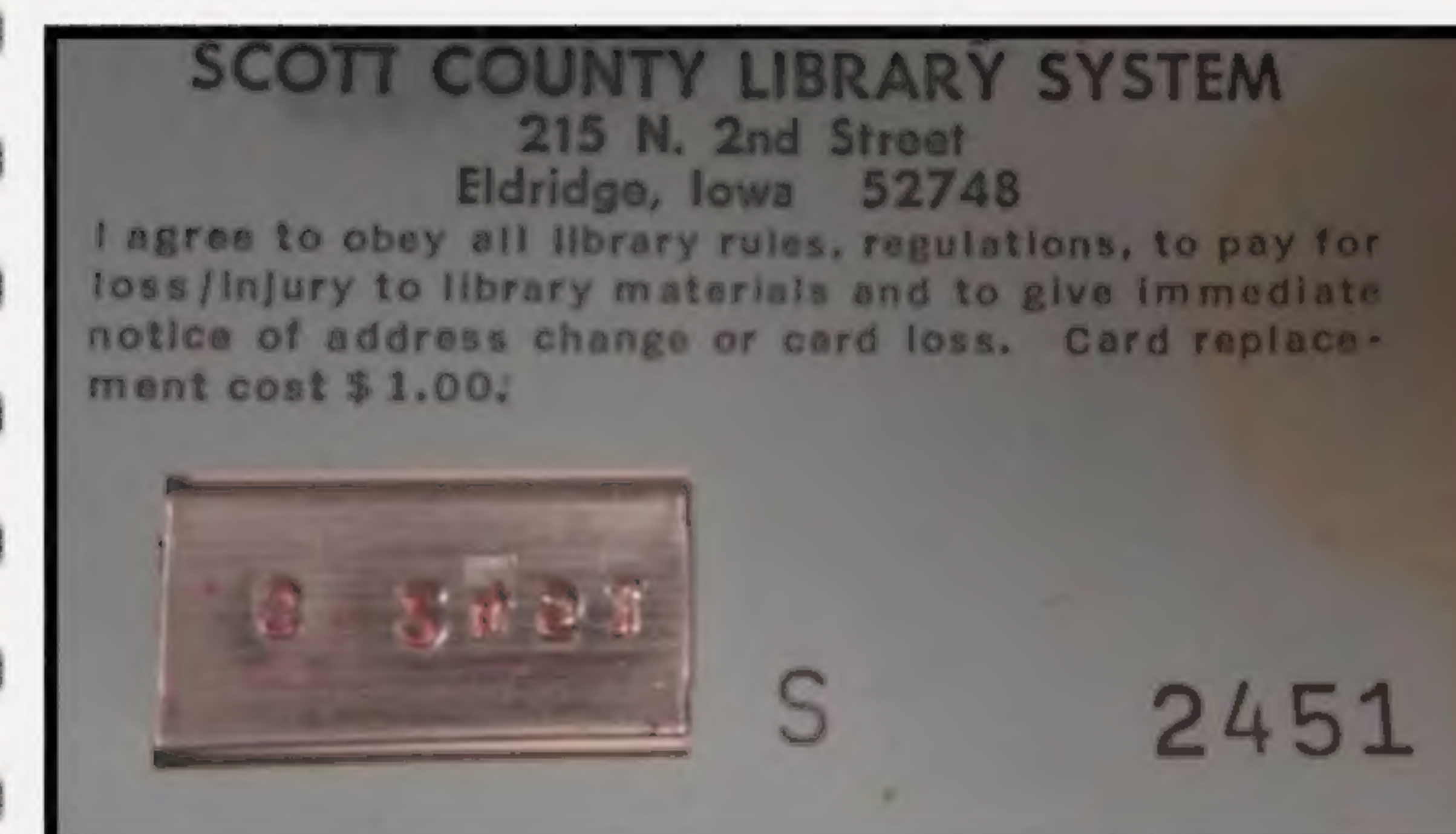
Scott County Library's first AV formats were 33 1/3 and 78 RPM records. The most popular were the "Talking Bible" and a collection of Bing Crosby songs.



Can I see your library card?



SCLS used library cards starting in 1950. A copy was kept in the station master's file.



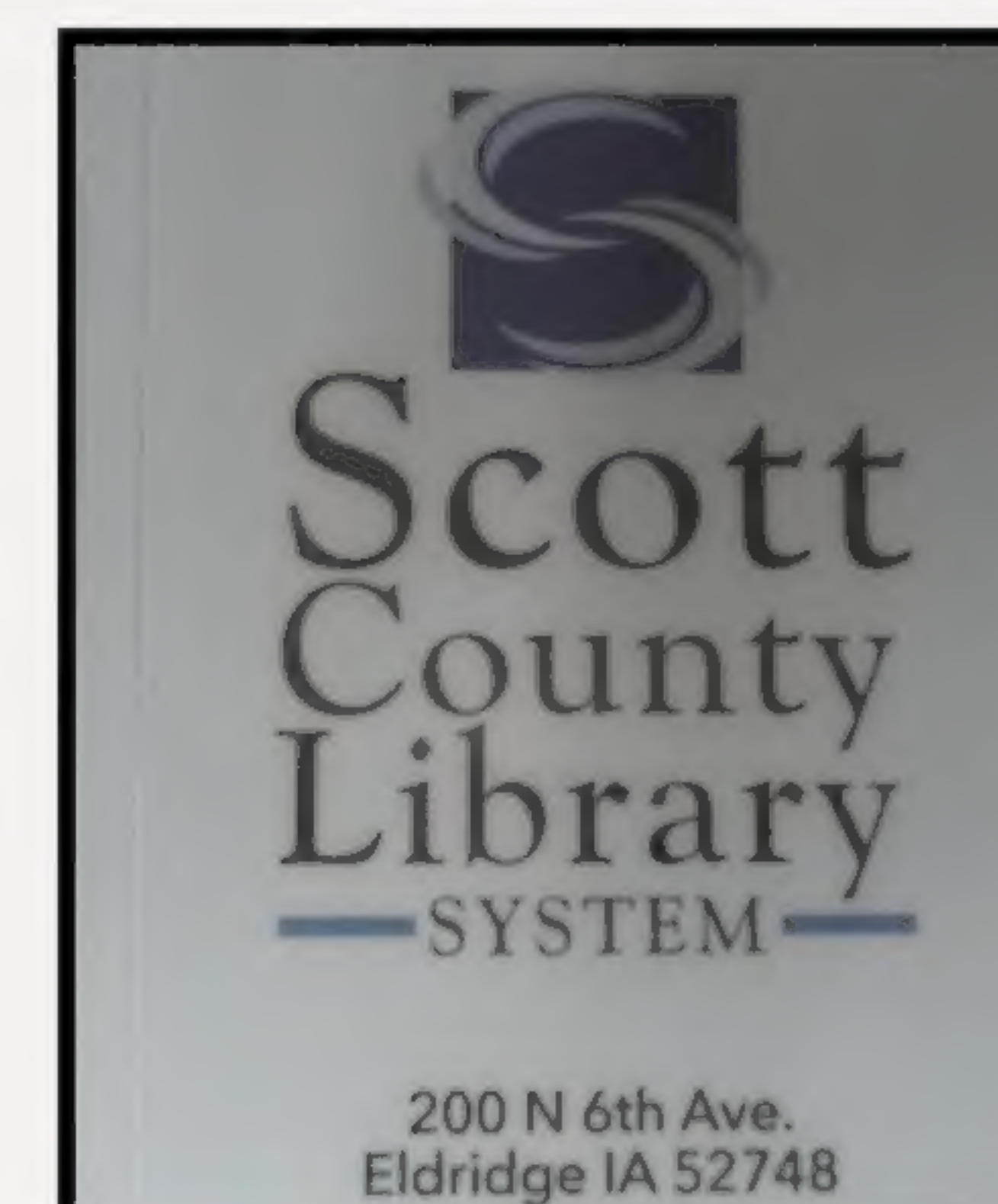
By the 1960s, SCLS was using a Gaylord machine to punch due dates and library card numbers on slips inside books. The metal strip embedded in the card is for the Gaylord.



In 1985, all library cards had to have a scannable barcode for borrowing from other QCA libraries.



Above: 2005 library card design, with key chain cards included. Right: 2018 library card design.



In 1951, the converted Bookmobile school bus was retired and the system purchased a Gertenslager vehicle, from a company dedicated to making bookmobiles. The Gertenslager lasted until 1976, when the 25-year-old vehicle was the oldest Bookmobile in the U.S. Bob Eickmeyer of the Quad City Times described the horn as "a combination of a Diesel locomotive, a tow boat blowing for a landing, and some say, the plaintive lowing of a discontented cow."

The LeClaire station opened in 1951 in a room of the James Ryan building, and the Walcott station opened in 1952 in the front of the Warnecke Warehouse - it was only 320 square feet. At this time, 25% of rural residents were registered library users. Library board president, F.J. Ford, cited centralization of rural library services and establishment of branches as part of a nationwide trend.

In February 1956, a station in Ridgeview Park opened at 125 Maze St. This station remained open until June 1960, at which point the city of Davenport annexed that community and those neighborhoods began to be served by the Davenport Public Library.

For a station to open, the town had to have a location, furnish the bookshelves, and find someone to take care of circulation (these were usually groups of volunteers). The size of each station collection was based on the size of the community and the whole collection was switched out every six weeks. The Scott County Library still rotates materials between branches on a regular schedule.

By 1955, the library had grown from 3,000 books to 30,000 and increased circulation by 9 times.



Blue Grass station located on the second floor of the American Legion Home circa 1950.



Lauretta Schutte was the first Blue Grass station attendant. She served for 29 years.



Princeton station attendant Ella Fick in the 480 square foot building during the 1950s.



Delores Dealey at the 320 square foot Walcott station circa 1952.



LeClaire station attendant Ruby Stuff originally volunteered through the American Legion Auxiliary.



In October 1951, the Gertenslager bookmobile replaced the converted school bus. This bookmobile lasted until 1976.

1960s

The 1960s brought huge growth to SCLS. This coincided with the rapid growth of the North Scott Community after the founding of the N.S. School District in 1959. Circulation increased ten-fold in the first decade, and the number of registered borrowers increased five times.



Joe Porter with Bookmobile patrons, summer 1960.

In 1960, SCLS opened substations in Houseman's Grocery store in Pleasant Valley, and the barber shops in McCausland and Long Grove. Each substation had several hundred books, and new ones were delivered every two weeks. The business proprietors checked out the books to customers and the library hours were the same as the business. In 1961, a fourth substation was set up in the County Home to serve elderly women. A "shut-in" delivery service was also established. This made SCLS the 12th largest public library in the state of Iowa.

A branch station opened up in Buffalo town hall in April 1962. The station was deemed necessary because the Bookmobile stops in Buffalo had gotten so busy.

Eldridge headquarters moved to a new location in December 1962. The new building at 215 N. 2nd St. doubled the size of the branch. It was fully air conditioned with adjustable ceiling lights. A garage with room for the bookmobile and book transport station bus was attached.

Almost 100 students from N.S. schools formed a human chain to move the library directly across the street from the old location. The move only took 2.5 hours.



Staff at headquarters in Eldridge in 1960. From left to right: Margaret Kramer, Sharon Morris, Mary Moore, Melva Durbin, and Marjorie Edwards.



Book chain to move the Eldridge branch from 218 N. 2nd St. to 215 N. 2nd St. The street was icy.

Board president, Ray Baetke, acting director, Melva Durbin, and the first Buffalo station attendant, Pauline Gold, at the opening of the Buffalo branch in 1962.



Bookmobile attendant, Joe Porter, LeClaire station attendant, Ruby Stuff, Jeanette Sells, Princeton station attendant, Ella Fick, Melva Durbin, Della Yoder, and Anna Wilford at the open house for the new Buffalo station.



First Bookmobile stop in Durant in 1964.

In 1964, the Bookmobile began regular runs to Durant's Dutton Park. Since Durant encompassed two counties at the time, some families had to pay a \$5 out of county fee for a library card. At this time, the Bookmobile was traveling 10,000 miles in a year. Weather could have a big impact on the route - once the vehicle was blown off the road during a tornado warning.

By 1966, the city of Durant had contracted with SCLS and opened a station in city hall with 4,000 books. SCLS was one of few libraries in the country with inter-state and inter-county agreements.

Besides books, the system also circulated framed art, various audio formats, and 8 millimeter silent films. In 1967, the library got its first after-hours book drop.

In June 1968, the New Liberty station opened in the New Liberty city park. SCLS was staffed by 9 station attendants, 2 bookmobile workers, and 5 employees at headquarters in Eldridge.

In 1969, Walcott moved into part of Niebuhr's Meat Market. In May, a station opened in Park View at 18 Lincoln Avenue.



Melva Durbin inside the new Eldridge headquarters, 1963.



Board member Warren Meyer puts in the sign for the New Liberty station in 1968.



Edna Spies' kindergarten class from Buffalo school visiting the Bookmobile in 1962.

1970s

The Long Grove branch opened in 1971. Shortly after, a pipe burst and the branch was closed for two weeks.

Reciprocal borrowing between Davenport, Bettendorf, and Scott County libraries was established in 1972. This allowed patrons to walk into any participating library and use their card, as well as return materials at the most convenient library. SCLS also instated borrowing by mail. Patrons would write in to the library and receive their books in the mail.

As the country was on the cusp of a technology boom, the Walcott branch got their first telephone.

1975 marked the 25th anniversary of the system, which had expanded from a Bookmobile and 3 branches to a Bookmobile and 11 branches, plus four substations.

By this time, the Bookmobile was the oldest still running in the U.S. It had a top operating speed of 35 miles per hour, increasing mechanical problems, and a general deterioration which made it hard to keep the books free of dust. In 1976, SCLS became the owner of "not only the oldest bookmobile in the United States...but also the newest." The new ride was a Moroney Monolith and had "rich oak paneling and warm orange carpet" - decor befitting the 1970s.

The old Bookmobile got new life as the new Park View branch on a lot at Central Trust and Savings bank. Library board members removed the wheels, dug a hole, and eventually put a fence around the exterior.



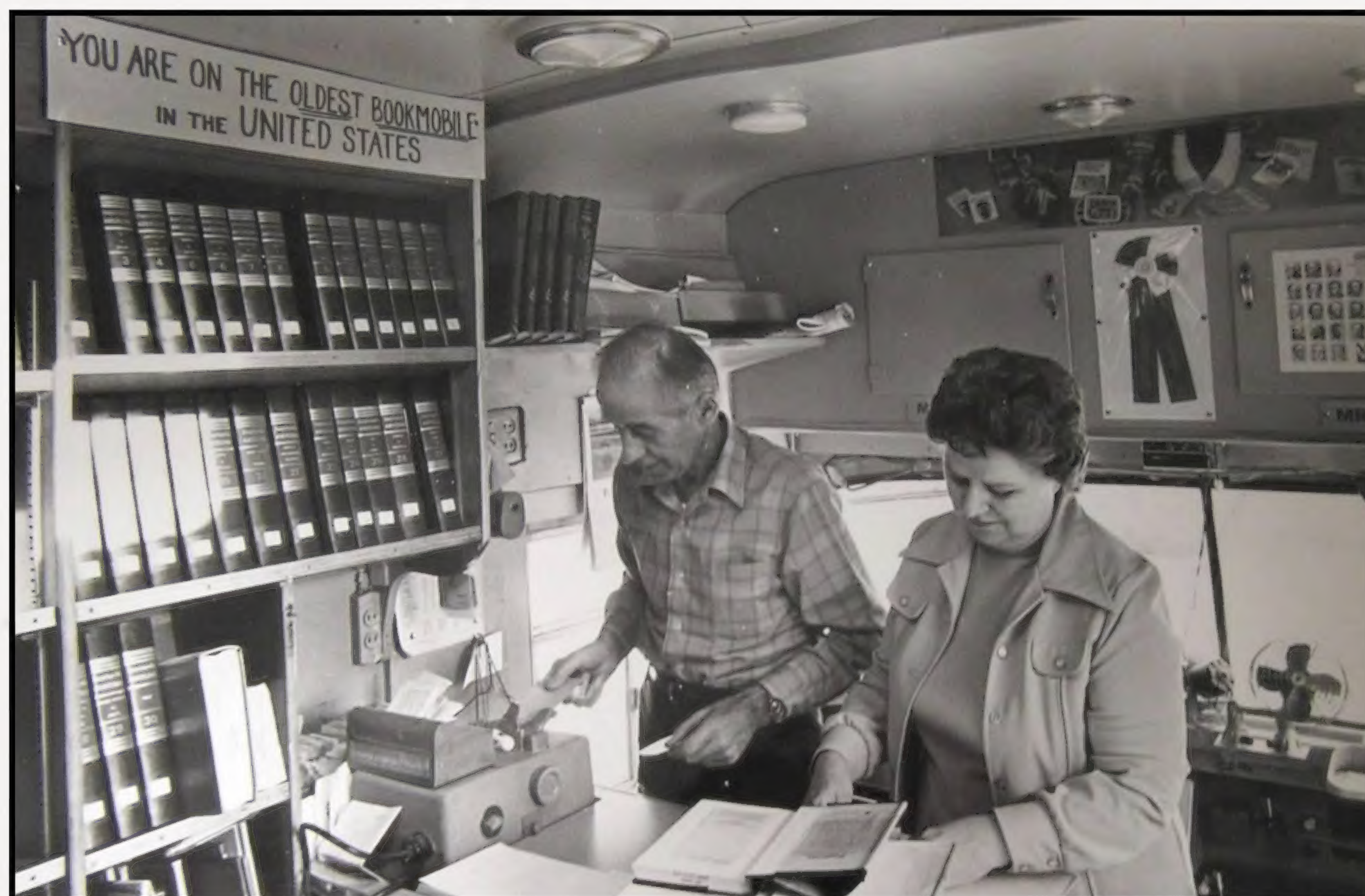
Lillian Bell
on the
phone,
1970s.



Library staff in their uniforms at a 1974 party at the M-T bar. A former staff person said the uniforms became mandatory because so many women were wearing mini-skirts to work. Left to right: Melva Durbin, Lillian Bell, Millie Wallace, Pam Merritt. Front: Verda Shaw, Mary Louise Cronkleton, Elaine Hein.

Top: Station attendant Eleanor Connell sorts through catalog cards at the opening of the Long Grove branch in 1971. Middle: Patrons browse the book sale in 1972 during the annual "Fantastic Friday" celebration hosted by the Eldridge Businessman's Association. Director Kay Runge dressed up in a cowboy hat for "Fantastic Friday" in 1974. Bottom: Bookmobile driver E.E. "Joe" Porter retires after 30 years of service. He poses with the ladies at his retirement in 1972. From left to right: Frances Kay, Verda Shaw, Millie Wallace, Mary Louise Cronkleton, and Pam Merritt. Melva Durbin in his lap.

Bookmobile driver Jurgen Reese and attendant Millie Wallace work on the oldest Bookmobile in the United States in 1976.



In 1977, an annex opened at Eldridge to alleviate overcrowded shelves. The 20 x 40 two-story addition was added to the southeast corner of the building.

By 1979, VHS and BETA video cassettes were available for checkout. The cost was \$1 for a 2 day loan.

Circulation increased by 30% in Durant in the 1970s and plans began for a new City Hall/Library. On May 1, 1979, a bond issue passed that provided funds for the current location at 402 6th St.

On the flip side, circulation at New Liberty and Long Grove was declining and various campaigns began to increase usage. In 1978, LeClaire's Mayor Norman Meinert led a campaign to leave the library system due to a tax rate increase. Library Director Kay Runge went to several council meetings to explain the budget and the services of the library and LeClaire stayed.

Many early pioneers of the library system began retiring including Melva Durbin, who was acting director for much of the 1960s, Jeanette Sells, Bookmobile attendant, and Joe Porter, longtime Bookmobile driver.

In 1979, Linda Sue Fillhart was hired as the Children's Librarian and Station Coordinator. Her position was the first professional position besides director at SCLS, requiring a master's degree in library science. One of her first popular programs was hosting a "hootenanny".

From the top right: Library supporters march in a parade in Durant in 1976; the new Moroney Bookmobile; SCLS Founder Edna Spies with Director Kay Runge at the system's 25th anniversary celebration in Eldridge in 1975. Right: Kay Runge "plants" the old Bookmobile in Park View.



Station attendant Lauretta Schutte at the 25th Anniversary celebration in Blue Grass in 1975.

1980s

In 1981, the Princeton branch moved into the old United Telephone Building. Later the same year, Durant moved into a newly built City Hall / Library building. The branch remains there today.

Long Grove had its second run-in with burst pipes. This time the library incurred almost \$4,000 worth of water damage. Some materials were ruined, along with carpet and insulation. The branch was closed for a few weeks.

The Buffalo branch moved to the old Community Building on 4th Street in 1982, gaining space and a few study tables.

As personal computing took off, SCLS got a TRS-80 business computer for staff use in 1983. It was first used for statistics, then staff began typing catalog cards. Shortly after, a microcomputer for public use was donated. It used the BASIC computer language, had 16K of memory and included a monitor, keyboard, and cassette recorder. The public could reserve a time to use the computer.

Through a national program sponsored by the Polaroid Corporation, the library began circulating Polaroid cameras.

Fundraising and planning for library automation began in 1983. Sixteen libraries from the Iowa and Illinois Quad Cities began working to place barcodes on items and library cards for scanning. The initial cost estimate was \$17,000 and most of it would be paid for by grants and donations. In 1984, the board of trustees formed the Scott County Library Foundation, mostly to raise funds for the equipment for a computerized circulation system. By 1985, a clerk had been hired to put 100,000 items into the computer.

Director Kay Runge accepted the director position at the Davenport Public Library and Gerry Rowland was hired. In an interview, he said his goals for the system included getting accreditation from the State Library of Iowa, placing copy machines at all stations, developing the VHS collection, and completing circulation automation.

In 1986, SCLS joined Quad-LINC (Quad City Libraries in Cooperation). The shared computer system, which Rowland called SCOTTIE (Scott County On-Line Terminal Telephone Information Exchange), included 6,000 patron cards and 26,000 books. Tens of thousands of patrons and items from the member libraries still needed to be entered.

The new system allowed SCLS patrons to check out and return books at any facility, and allowed patrons to pay fines at any library. Library staff were able to search holdings throughout the system.

In 1981, the Durant branch moved into a newly built City Hall and Library building. A chain of kids moved books.



Middle: Children's librarian Tami Chumbley (Finley) with Kiwanis representative Brian Roesler and local children celebrating the "Read a Million Minutes" program in 1985.



Bottom: Director Kay Runge, Debbie Andresen, and Lorene Altenhofen from the Jayceettes pose with a library computer in 1985. A sign for cassette tapes, 8 track tapes, color slides, and 8 mm movies is in the background.

The Farmer's Savings Bank in Princeton donated their old building to SCLS for use as a branch library in 1986. Volunteers and donors from Princeton banded together to cover the labor and costs of renovation including roof repair and a new furnace to the tune of around \$10,000. The Princeton branch remains in the old bank building and the old bank vault has been used for several things including computers, storage, and library book sales.

In 1986, SCLS was awarded a \$56,000 grant through the federal Library Services and Construction Act (LCSA). The funds were to be used for a new library/City Hall building at 116 Mississippi St. The Blue Grass branch was in a 64-year-old building and had no restrooms, no study or programming space, and no handicap accessibility. The library temporarily operated out of the elementary school while construction took place.

The 1980s continued a technology boom in libraries. In 1980, SCLS got a screen-based periodical index, which listed thousands of articles by subject. This was only four years after Eldridge had the first public photocopier in the system. The price was 10 cents a page - the same as it is today.

In April 1987, the Bookmobile, Eldridge, Walcott, and Durant had computers in place, but other stations were still working on funding. In the same year, SCLS was one of the first 59 libraries in Iowa to qualify for state accreditation.

In 1988, the SCLS Foundation funded 10 Apple IIE computers for the public to use. They were distributed to various branches.



Iowa Governor Terry Branstad visits the Eldridge library in conjunction with his "Homecoming '86" program. The program was designed to highlight the progress of the library and honor state and local lawmakers. From left to right, Tami Chumbley (Finley), Elaine Hein (white shirt), Joanne Thornton (Park View), Gerry Rowland (Library Director), Governor Terry Branstad, Wava Madden, Bernice Meredith, Verda Shaw, Royce Snyder (bookmobile driver in background), Connie Stephens (Owings) (yellow shirt, partially obscured), Betty Korthaus (pink suit), Millie Wallace (partially obscured).



Raymond Baetke 1911-1999

Ray Baetke was one of the original board members for the Scott County Library System starting in 1949. He served on the library board for the next 37 years, retiring in 1986.

At his retirement he was quoted as saying "Looking at how we started, I had no idea it would evolve into something like this."

Baetke was referring to the growth of the system from a single bookmobile to 11 stations that were also part of a bi-state cooperative system.

He was active in the community outside the library as well; serving through his church, the Scott County Farm Bureau, the Mississippi Valley Fair Board, the Eldridge Sportsman Club, and as a Scott County poll worker.



Library board president, Ray Baetke's miniature of where board meetings were held.



Bookmobile driver Royce Snyder works on a computer on the Bookmobile in 1986. It took several years to automate all branches in the system.



Top: Map showing 10 branches of the Scott County Library System in 1986. (The 11th branch was the Bookmobile).

Bottom: The Bookmobile driving down a country road in Scott County in 1986.

Libraries participating in plans for the Quad-LINC computer network, 1983

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| *Augustana College Library | *Marycrest College Library |
| *Bettendorf Public Library | *Moline Public Library |
| *Blackhawk College Learning Resource Center | *Muscatine Community College Library |
| *Clinton Community College | *River Bend Library System |
| *Davenport Public Library | *Rock Island Public Library |
| *Deere & Company Library | *St. Ambrose College Library |
| *East Moline Public Library | *Scott Community College Library |
| | *Scott County Library System |
| | *Western Township Library, Orion |



Local television personality Paula Sands (from TV-6, NBC affiliate) visits the Eldridge branch in 1988. Children's librarian Mike Rogalla looks on.



Children visit with Santa in 1986 at the Eldridge branch. Computer automation eventually made the library catalog in the background obsolete.

1990s

The SCLS Foundation bought a new Plymouth Voyager mini-van to replace a 1974 station wagon used to transport books between branches. The Foundation also began raising money to replace the 1976 bookmobile.

Another Moroney bookmobile was purchased in 1995, and the old bookmobile retired after 19 years of service. The new vehicle cost \$113,000 and included a wheelchair lift.

The Friends of the Eldridge Library formed in 1989/1990 and in their first 15 months, they donated ceiling fans, chairs, and carpet for the children's area. They raised \$5,000 from bake sales, book sales, and asking for donations.

New Liberty got a new branch building at 501 Liberty Street in September 1991, leaving rented quarters, expanding from one room to three, and adding a meeting room. The previous location had no restroom. The director of SCLS had to put an ad in the paper asking for space after a rent increase made it unfeasible to continue in the previous location.

Walcott moved to 207 S. Main Street into a former construction building remodeled by Larry and Kristi Keller specifically for the library.

Head of technical services, Jalois Crotty, received recognition for her grant-writing success in 1996, when she received \$28,000 in grants for the city of Eldridge and the library system.

The library board approved the purchase of the adjacent building, which used to house the Eldridge Post Office, hoping to connect the library to another 2,500 feet of space and gain parking. Eventually, the project was deemed too expensive and attention turned to other possible locations, finally landing on the former Slagle Grocery store building at 200 N. 6th Avenue.

Several influential and long-time staff retired, including Verda Shaw (Eldridge), Lois Havenhill (Princeton), Frances Waddell (Blue Grass), and Betty Korthaus (Eldridge & Durant).



Above: Children's book character Arthur hangs out with kids and bookmobile driver Royce Snyder (on left with beard).



Left: The angel tree is obscured by presents at the Eldridge library. The North Scott food pantry partnered with the library starting in the late 1980s to collect gifts for underprivileged kids locally. Below: Library Director Anne Conner and Friends president Karen Collins along with students Nicole Jurisic and C.J. Sissel pose with a fundraising sign for a remodel at Eldridge.





Left: Director Anne Conner poses with the new bookmobile outside the Eldridge branch in 1995.

Below: New lettering added to the bookmobile in 1995.



Top left: Assistant director, Sue Sissel, Children's librarian, Shelly Fehr, Secretary, Sharon Herron, and Bernice Meredith pose in "Cat in the Hat" outfits in 1995.

Top middle: Jalois Crotty drives the new Plymouth Voyager van in a 1998 parade.

Top right: Volunteers move boxes into the new Walcott branch in 1996.

Far left: A crowd gathers for the opening of the New Liberty branch in 1991.

Left: Children's librarian Mara Wiggins wears her Peter Rabbit Halloween costume in 1999.

The 1990s also brought several challenges for SCLS including rent increases at several branches. Staffing costs were also on the rise.

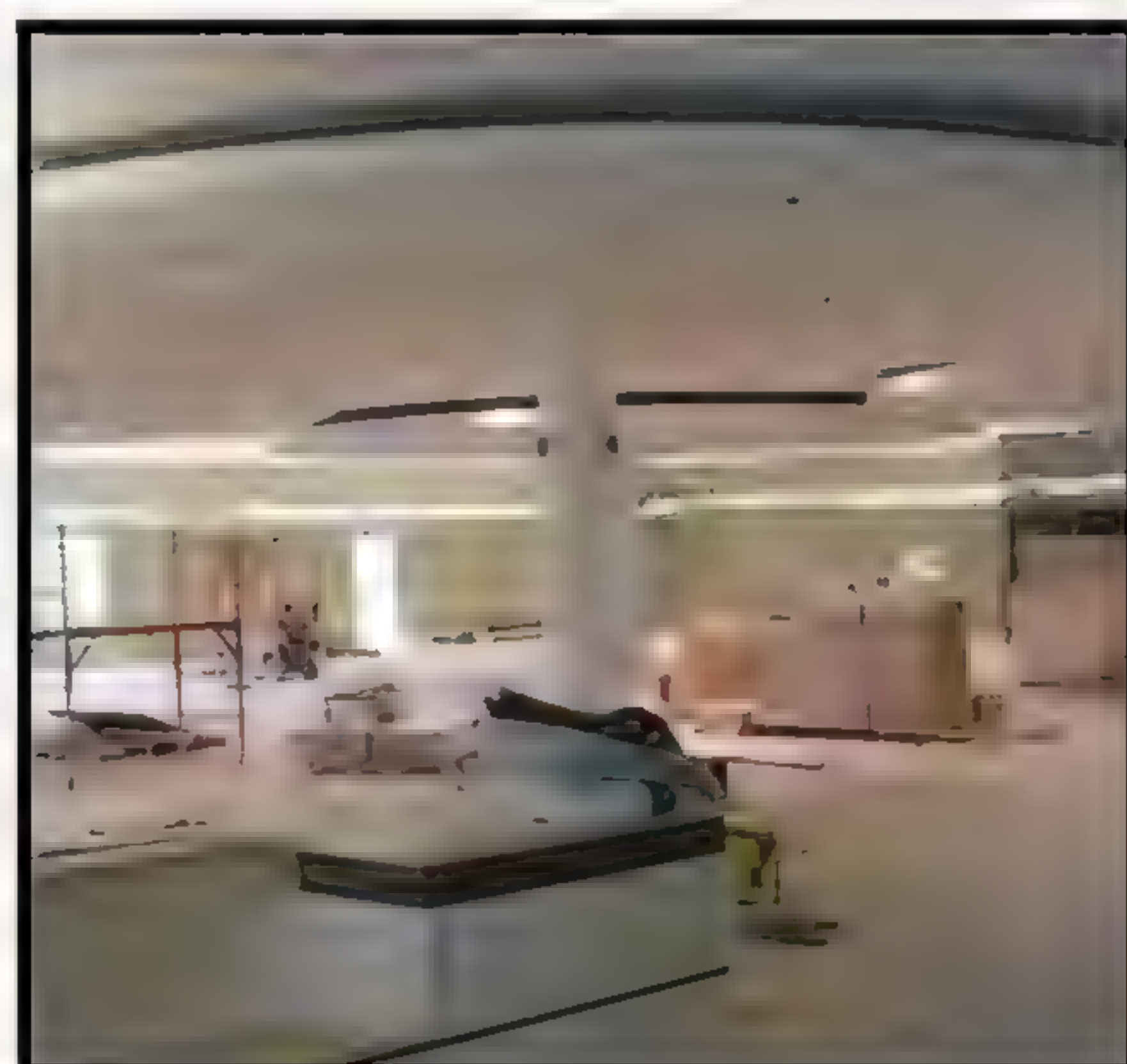
In the late 1990s, the Merle and Adeline Barkhuff Trust bequeathed \$520,000 to the city of LeClaire if they could raise matching funds and build a city library. A Scott County Library System branch had operated in LeClaire since 1951. In 1999, LeClaire residents voted via referendum to withdraw from SCLS upon completion of the new facility.

2000s



Top: Library staff advertise a "charrette," a process for the public to help plan the new Eldridge branch. Front row: Sue Sissel, Diane Hall. Back row: Lorna Lillis, Bernice Meredith, Elizabeth Clark, Karen Collins, Anne Conner, Jalois Crotty.

Director Anne Conner poses in the new Eldridge branch in September 2003.



In January 2000, the SCLS board voted to buy the former Slagle's grocery building for the Eldridge branch. This plan replaced the long standing plan to buy the old post office on 2nd Street and expand there.

The 20,000 square foot facility opened on September 2, 2003 and included more room for collections, meeting room spaces, staff work spaces, and parking. The previous 6,000 square foot headquarters had been occupied by SCLS since 1962, and, in those 41 years, the population of Eldridge grew from 650 to 5,000 people.

The SCLS Foundation mounted a massive capital campaign to pay for the \$2.11 million project. The City of Eldridge, Scott County, Scott County Regional Authority, Riverboat Development Authority, Moonlight Chase, and the Carver Foundation were major donors, but donations came from everywhere. Farmers Robert and Imogene Petersen donated 6,000 bushels of corn to the cause, totaling more than \$11,000.

Improvements were made at other branches as well. Princeton added "comfort zones", and purchased a new furnace, roof, carpeting, and furniture. A 2005 RDA grant paid for the renovations.

Director Anne Conner accepted a directorship in Oregon and resigned in April 2004. Pam Collins started as director in September of that year. Collins stated her goal was to provide a "higher quality of service at a reduced price per capita."

One of Collin's first projects was the system's first website, which launched in 2004 and the purchase of online databases to supplement, and eventually replace, the print reference collection.

LeClaire's new library, started due to a gift from the Barkhuff trust, opened on June 30, 2004, ending 51 years of county library service to the town. LeClaire remains in the same cooperative library consortium as SCLS today.



The Princeton branch benefited from a 2005 RDA grant establishing "comfort zones" and a meeting room.



In May 2004, Children's Librarian Debbie (Hassi) Noonan and Ed White librarian Mia Beesley hosted the first North Scott Battle of the Books. Teams from all five elementary schools participated.

SCLS went through a ten month study called Libraries Together in 2005 along with Bettendorf, Davenport, and LeClaire to improve services.

In September 2005, a reading garden for outdoor story times was dedicated at the Eldridge branch in memory of SCLS founder Edna Spies.

In 2006, the Early Literacy Outreach Program began under the direction of retired teacher Carol Albrecht. The goal of the program was to reach children with books and story times before they started kindergarten. Grant money helped remodel the Buffalo branch providing new computers and a children's play area.

Director Pam Collins left SCLS in November 2006, but remains a librarian in the Quad Cities today.

Reference librarian Paul Seelau was hired as the next Director. One of his first acts was to get a large sign for the front of the headquarters building so people could see the library from LeClaire Road.

The city of Durant funded improvements to the Durant branch, and Eldridge added Sunday hours from Labor Day to Memorial Day.

Due to library service restructuring in Illinois, the Quad-LINC consortium was renamed PrairieCat in 2007 and expanded to include 198 libraries and eight million items.



The Edna Spies memorial reading garden in 2006.

Top left: Maggie Collogan, Karen Collins, Elizabeth Randall, and Debbie (Hassi) Noonan hold the plaque for the first North Scott Battle of the Books in 2004, sponsored by the Friends of the Eldridge Library.

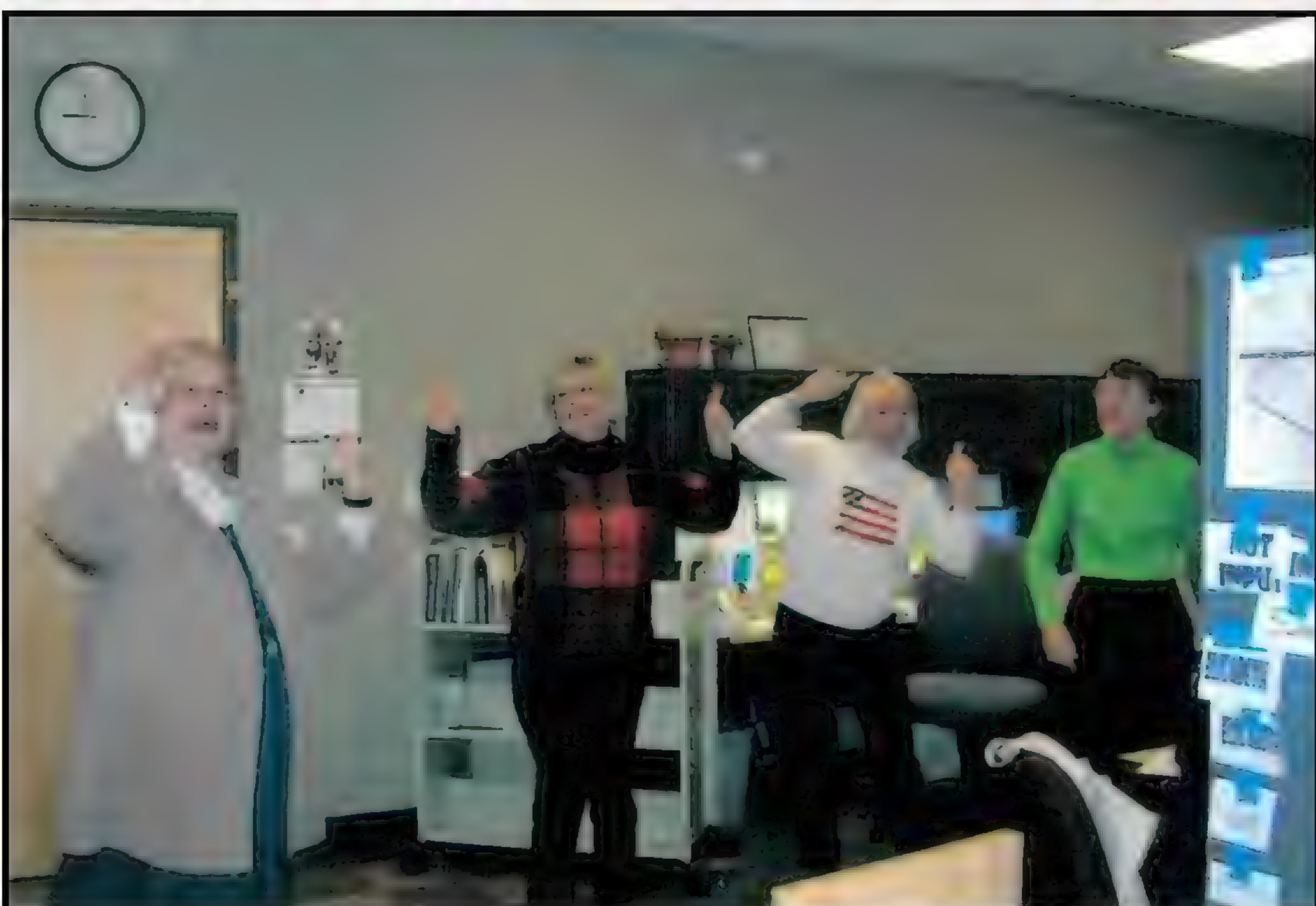
Top: Iowa Public Television's Dan Wardell poses with kids in the reading garden in 2008.

Middle: A girl reads to Keisha the library dog on the Bookmobile in 2006. The Maltese was a therapy dog owned by staff member Helen Edwards and "wrote" a column for the North Scott Press called Keisha's Korner.

Right: The end of summer reading party at Princeton in 2006.

Middle: Three "generations" of Bookmobile librarians gather for the 50th anniversary of the library system in 2000. Marilyn Wright retired in 1999, Millie Wallace retired in 1988, and Debbie (Hassi) Noonan was hired in 1999.

Below: Technical services staff Margie Bender, Elizabeth Randall, Nancy Gruber, and Karen Collins take a break to dance at Eldridge in 2008.



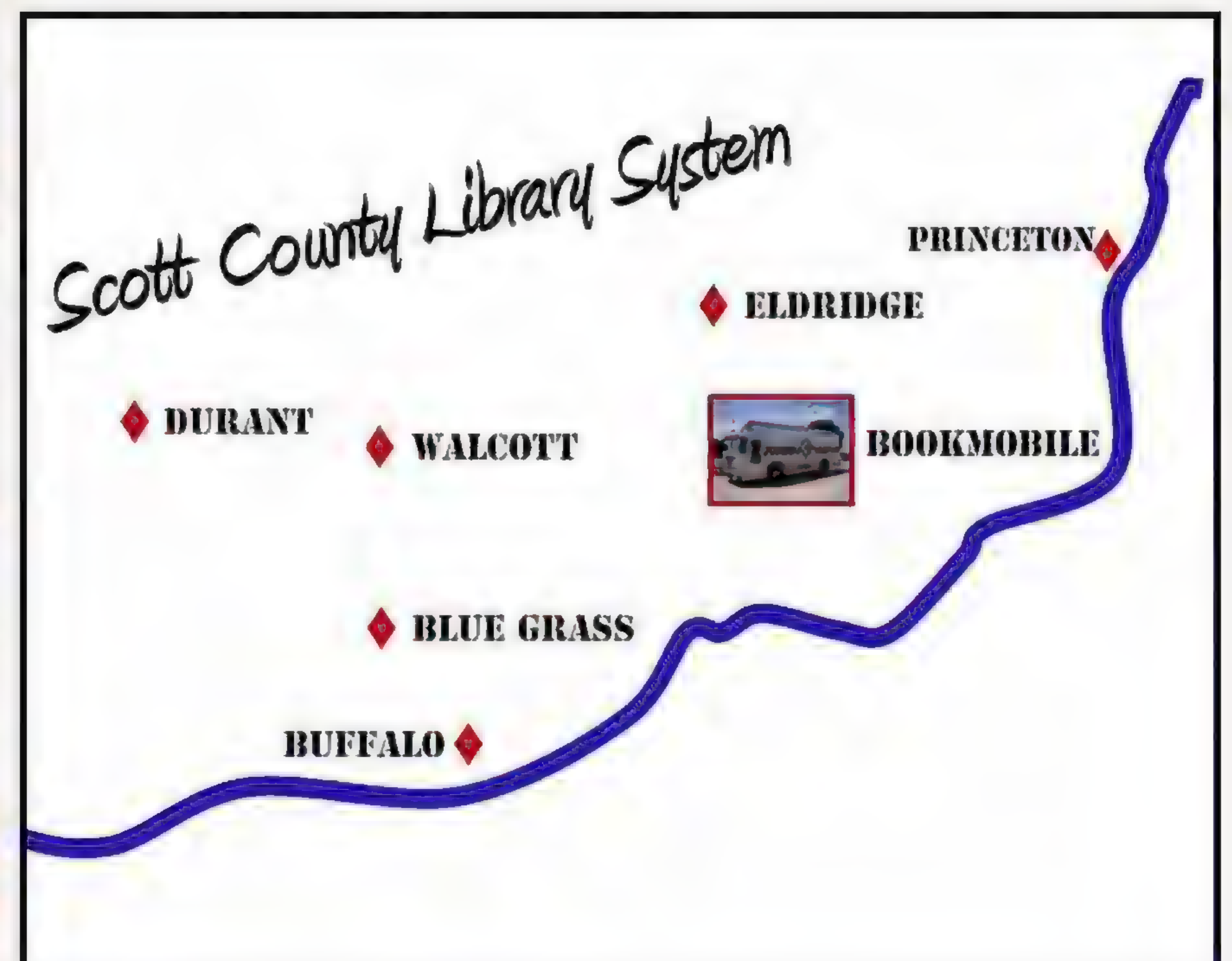
On March 7, 2006, the SCLS board approved a strategic plan to realign facilities, staff and funding to improve services. Part of the plan included closing three branches by May 30 of that year.

"Very little about SCLS has changed in decades," said board president Doug Morrell. "It is time to make changes based on what we know about the people of Scott County and what we believe the future of library services has in store."

Park View, Long Grove, and New Liberty were selected to close after a three month traffic study, which determined that those branches had the least usage. New Liberty, for example, only had 10 or 12 people visiting in one month.

Director Pam Collins estimated the closures freed up \$50,000 to be spent on outreach and technology improvements. The part-time branch staff were offered comparable positions elsewhere in the system. A "core collection" was developed in the remaining branch buildings in Blue Grass, Buffalo, Durant, Eldridge, Princeton, and Walcott and hours were expanded at several of those locations.

"People like a library with more services and more hours," Director Pam Collins said.



SCLS closed three branch locations in 2006, leaving the Bookmobile and facilities at Blue Grass, Buffalo, Durant, Eldridge, Princeton, and Walcott.

2010s



Above, the new Bookmobile in 2013. Local graphic designer Shane Glover created the images for the sides.

Right: Bookmobile Associate Cathy Zimmerman enjoys her new ride.



After 60 years of service, the Scott County Library System continued to seek out new formats. In 2010, SCLS joined the WILBOR Overdrive consortium and began offering ebook and eaudiobook titles. The next year, the RiverShare consortium formed with 20 libraries from Iowa and Illinois.

Other new formats for circulation included digital music and magazines, Quad City attraction passes, Playaway launchpads and audiobooks, pre-loaded Kindles, story time and play time kits, and a telescope.

In this decade, libraries nationwide saw a decline in traditional circulation measures, largely due to the advent of digital and streaming media.

SCLS put a focus on programming and community engagement at all branches, and saw a 20% increase in program attendance for all ages.

In 2013, the library unveiled a new \$250,000 Blue Bird Bookmobile from OBS Inc. The old bookmobile had been in service for 18 years, logging 151,000 miles, and the repair costs were skyrocketing. Large donations from the Bechtel Trust, Bill & Linda Tubbs of the North Scott Press, Birdies for Charity, Carver Trust, Friends of the Eldridge Library, Hubble-Waterman, the Princeton Days Committee, North Scott Rotary, SCRA, and U.S. Bank funded the project.

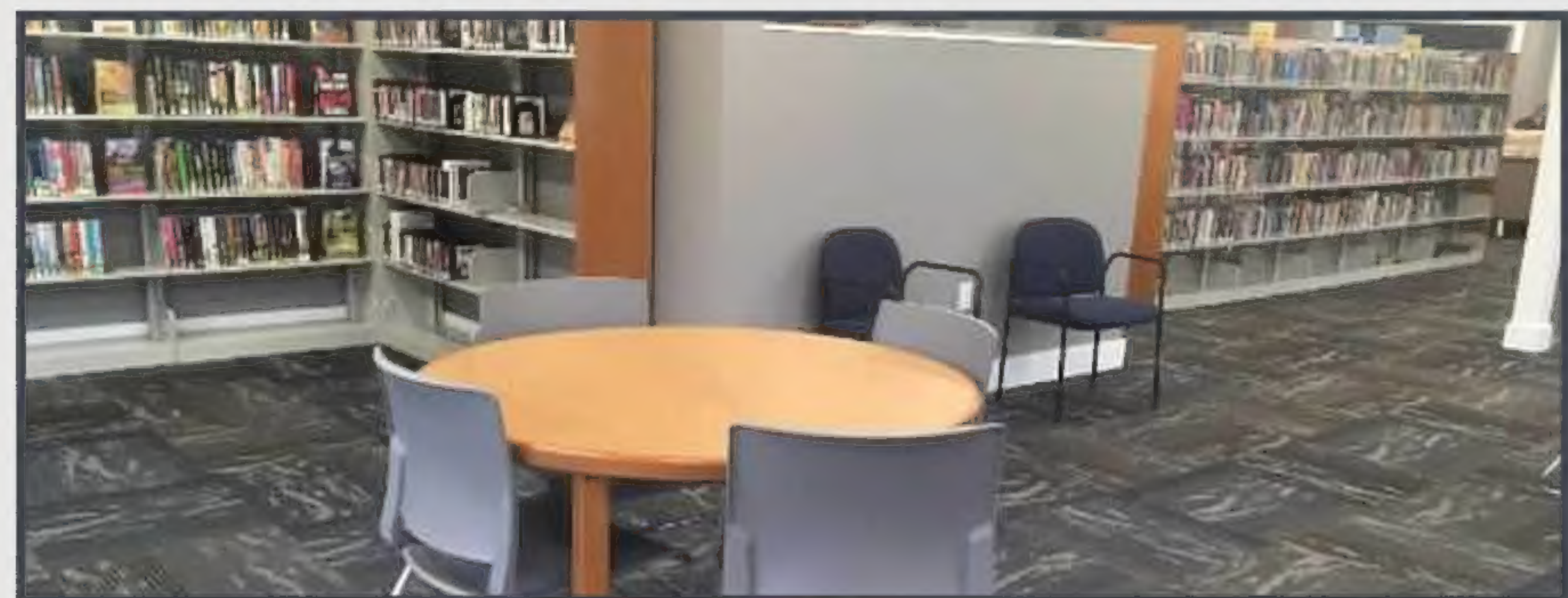
The citizens of New Liberty voted to no longer pay to receive services from SCLS in 2013, but the citizens of Dixon chose to uphold their affiliation with the county system. SCLS is one of three county library systems still in existence in the state of Iowa.

In 2014, Director Paul Seelau retired and Tricia Kane from Rock Island Public Library was hired.

Fundraising for a new building for the Walcott branch began in 2015. The site chosen was the former Niebuhr's meat market. The library branch had previously been located in that building alongside the meat market from 1969-1983, but this time the whole building was remodeled and designed as a library with a meeting room. It opened in October 2017.



Far left: A Little Free Library craze swept the nation and the Friends of the Eldridge Library installed 3 in Eldridge -- some of the first recorded in Eastern Iowa. Left: Maggie Collogan, Director Tricia Kane, Jennifer Reed, Laura Klever, Sarah Carlin, and Katie Boucher pose for the super hero themed reading program in 2015.



Above left the exterior and interior of the Walcott branch in 2017. Dozens of donors funded the new building including Bechtel Trusts, City of Walcott, the Hubbell-Waterman Foundation, Scott County Board of Supervisors, Walcott Trust and Savings Bank, Iowa 80 Truckstop, Regional Development Authority, and the Scott County Regional Authority.



From left, Emily Arnold hangs out with Elise the therapy dog. Elise, owned by Diana Zogg, started at SCLS in 2018. The Buffalo branch expands the toy area in 2018. Down by the Creek companion animal sanctuary provides a program at the old Walcott branch in the summer of 2017.

In January 2016, the Blue Grass branch moved into a building at the site of the old Casey's General Store at 121 S. Mississippi St. The new facility included a meeting room and double the square footage.

Information and Tech Services Librarian Christine Barth spearheaded several local history initiatives to both preserve and provide access to unique Scott County resources. Volunteers input data from the Scott County Cemetery index into a searchable online site. Over the next few years, the North Scott Yearbooks, the North Scott Press, and the North Scott Morning Stars were digitized and made searchable online. The North Scott Press was funded by a state grant and matching funds were provided by other grants and local organizations. In 2019, the library was awarded a \$13,000 IMLS Accelerating Promising Practices grant for a Community Memory Project to scan and provide access to Scott County History.

Many employees and branch associates that had been with the system for decades retired, including Carol Albrecht, Margie Bender, Karen Collins, Cindi Davis, Helen Edwards, Linda Daufeldt, Nancy Gruber, Joan Hennigan, Penne Miller, Kim Olson, and Cindy Mosier.

SCLS increased its attention on outreach services, resurrecting homebound delivery via the Bookmobile, adding a baby story time, and conducting a school supply drive on the Bookmobile in 2019. Bookmobile associate Cathy Zimmerman was elected as vice president/president-elect of the national Association of Bookmobile and Outreach Services (ABOS) in 2018.

SCLS Directors



Edna Spies
Founder
1947-1950



Elizabeth Hage
1950-1957



George Gardner
1957-1959



Van Veatch
1959-1961



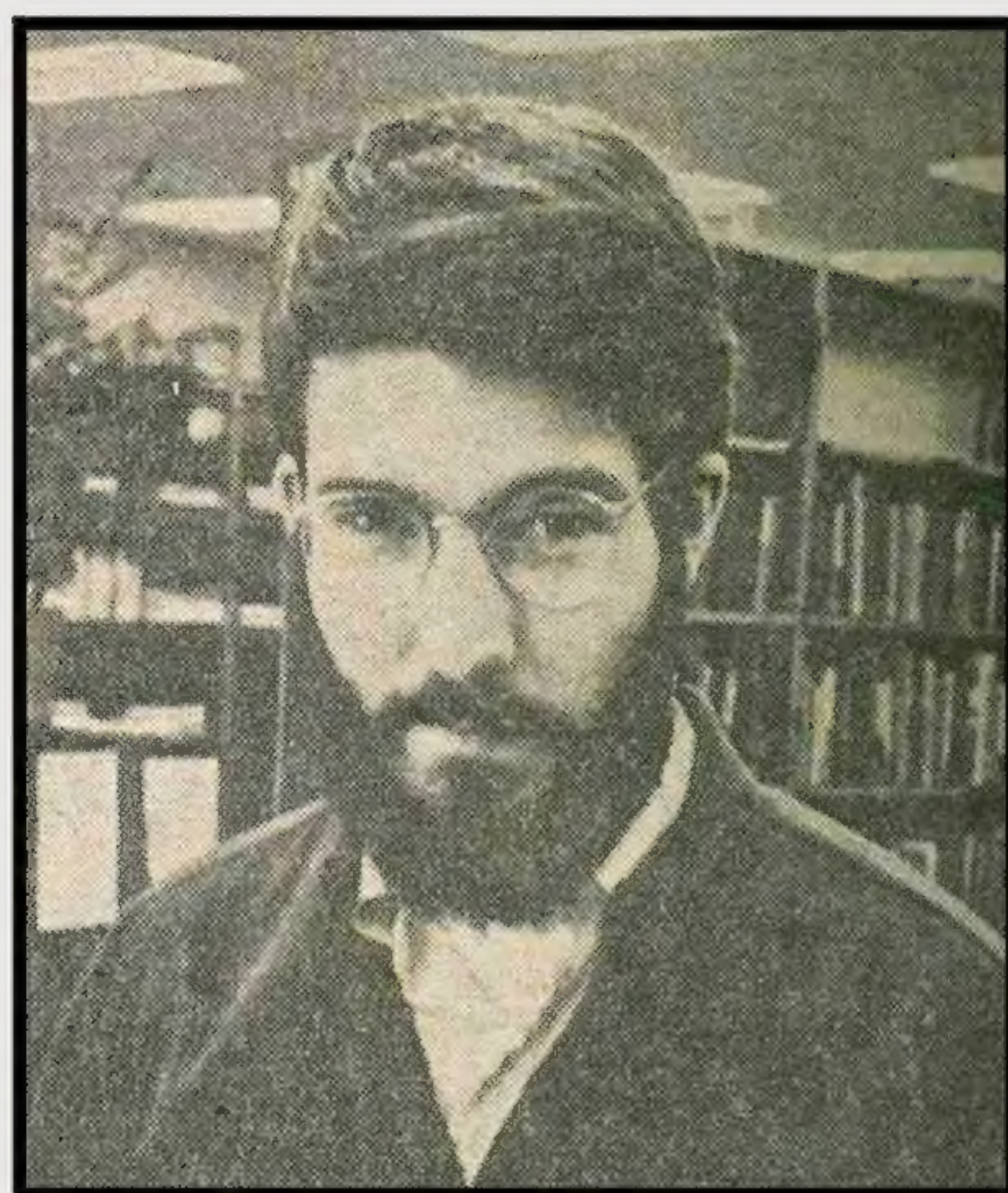
Melva Durbin
Acting Director
1961-1967



Henry Engel
1964



Sue Rebro
1967-1968



Mark Jones
1969-1970



Denny Danese
1970-1974



Kay Runge
1974-1985



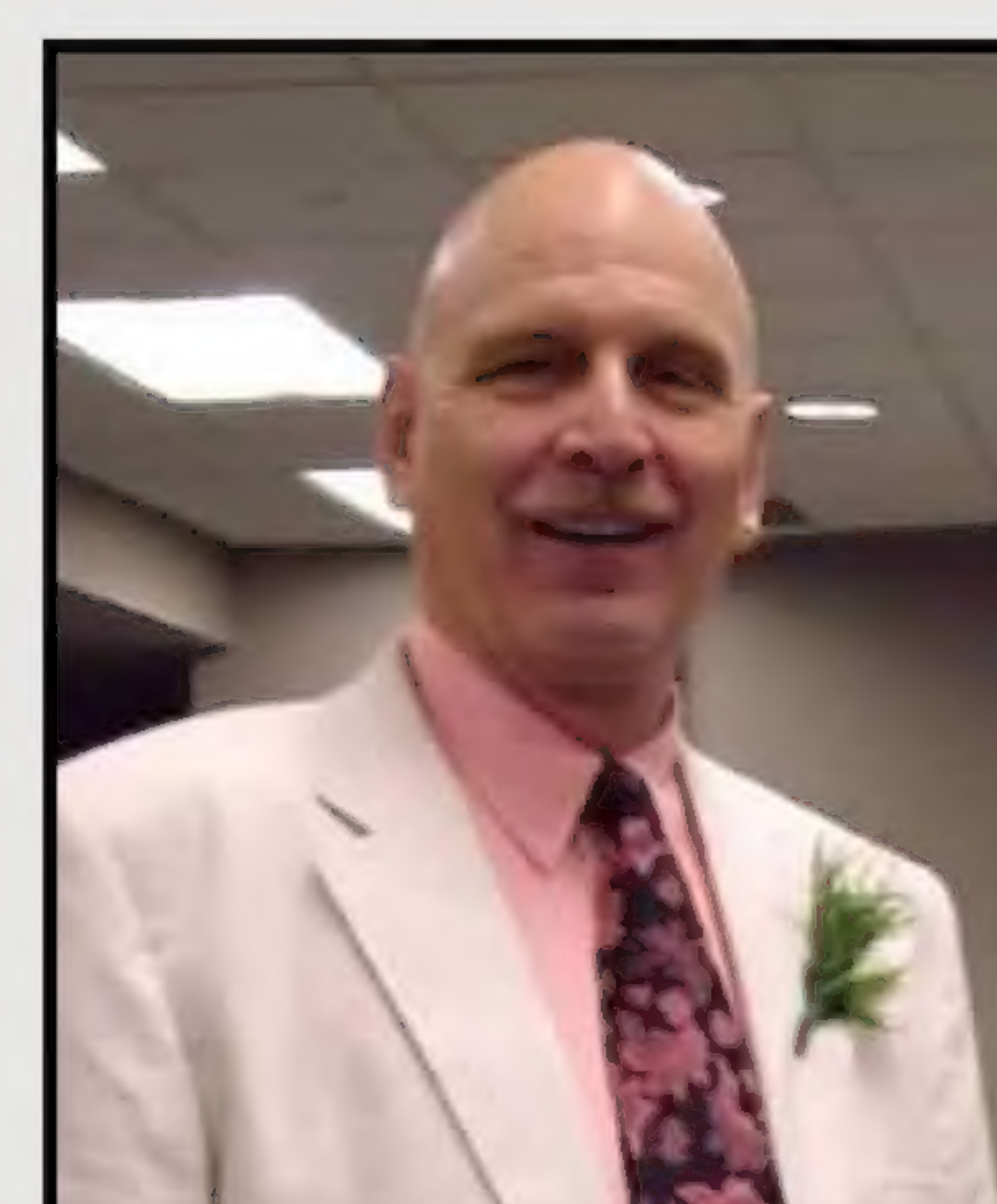
Gerry Rowland
1986-1987



Anne Conner
1988-2004



Pam Collins
2004-2006



Paul Seelau
2006-2014



Tricia Kane
2014-present

Special thanks to current and former staff members, Elaine Hein, Tricia Kane, Connie Owings, and Sue Sissel for tracking down details and identifying photos for this history.

Without the help of volunteers and staff Jo Carter, Liz Ferry, Carol Halverson, Nancy Kerns, and Lynn Palmer, this project never would have happened.

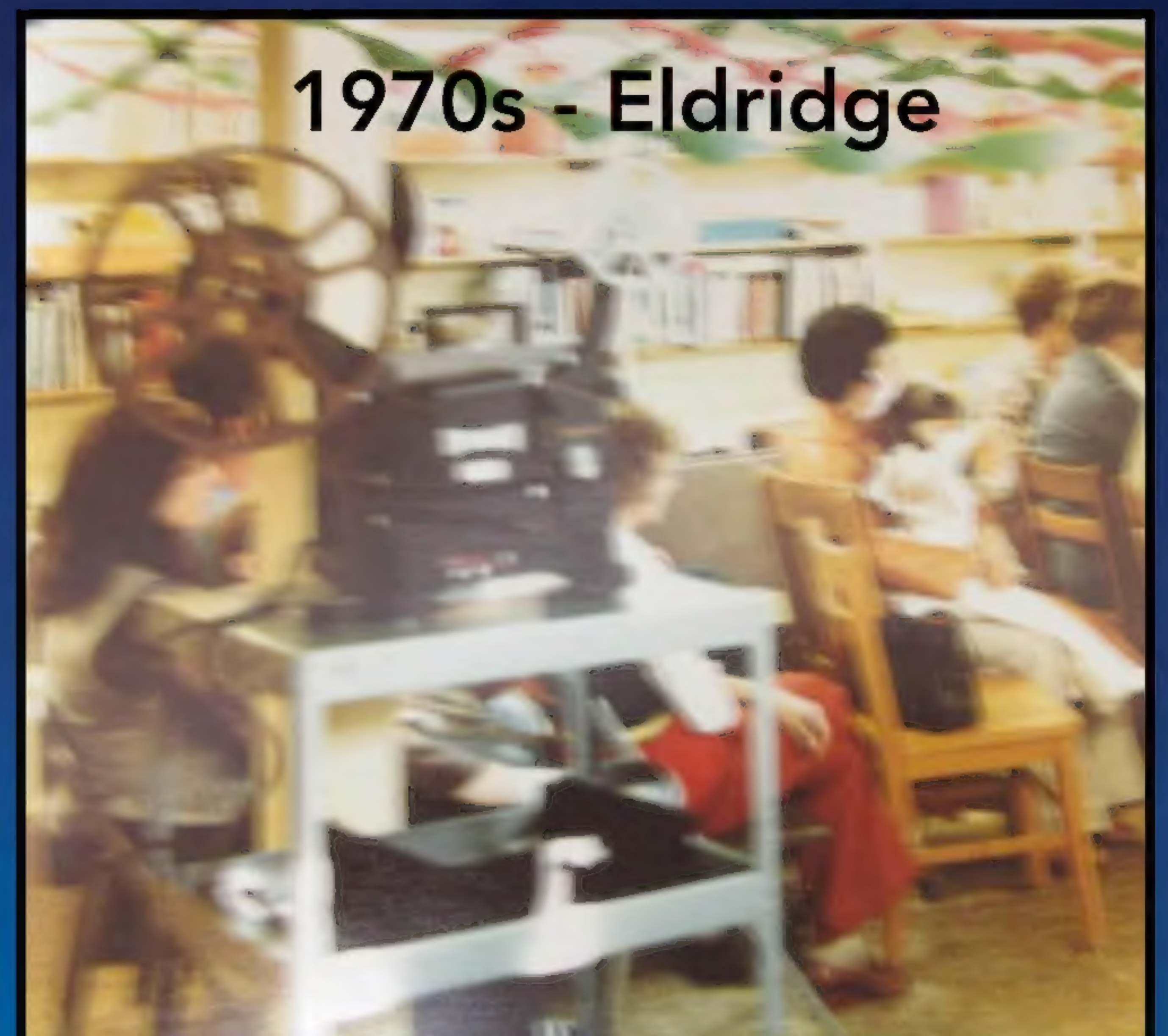
Thanks to the Quad City Times for permission to use the photos of Henry Engel and Mark Jones.



1950s - Bookmobile



1960s - Bookmobile



1970s - Eldridge



1980s - Durant



1990s - Princeton



2000s - Eldridge



2010s - Bookmobile

70 years